1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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writer recorded statements from some younger men that certain territory belonged to the people now living upon it, while a few old men said this land really belonged to an older group that had died out. Once these old men are dead, it is likely that all memory of the ownership by a former clan will be gone.

Clan territory always has as a central core the land surrounding the water hole. Near the water hole the camps are usually made. Unless a river, lake, or other body of water defines it, no exact boundary exists between two clans. Usually a river or lake is occupied by one clan and the barren plains between form the outer limits for it and its neighbors. When one traverses a dry, unproductive part of the country, those parts of it near billibong (Australian white term: small lake or pool), lily places, and water locations are known to all peoples to belong to a definite clan; but as one moves across the dry plains toward the water hole of another group, there is considerable doubt as to which clan owns the plains area. No native would bother himself about it; it is looked upon as without significance in the lives of the people.

The land along the sea, the bays, inlets and tidal rivers, however, has very definite boundaries, well known to all peoples. Usually myths or folk tales record the facts of territorial ownership in the tribal tradition. The land of the clan is not always contiguous but may be separated by a distance of twenty or thirty miles. The home of a clan, however, is usually one continuous tract. The Gwiyamil, situated in the interior on Buckingham River, possess a small island in Caddell Straits between Elcho and Howard Islands. The island, piled high with boulders and with one wind-blown tree, cannot be more than 200 feet in diameter. Its natural geographic affinities are with Elcho Island, but it is "owned" by this inland clan. The Murngin say that Garrawark, a creator totemic fish, dived underground from the Gwiyamil well in the interior and came up at this island, made it, and called it Gwiyamil country. Garrawark also made other clan countries, but he did not call them Gwiyamil, which exposes the rationalization in this answer. A guess, based on similar types of association among the Murngin, is that some peculiarity in the country and the island associated the two places in their minds. The Milyingi, Djirin, Warumeri, Marungun and other clans all have additional territory away from their clan home and water holes.

No land can be taken from a clan by an act of war. A clan does not possess its land by strength of arms but by immemorial tradition

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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132 In the rainy season great torrents of tropical rain fall daily, making
312 large portions of the mainland south of the Arafura Sea, for weeks and sometimes months at a time, a series of islands in a shallow sea of mud and water. Then, with rare interruptions, there is continuous drought for six or seven months. During the wet season tropical vegetation [137] has sprung up everywhere; giant spear grass sometimes grows to twelve and fourteen feet in height, covering all the country and paths, making communication a difficult matter at best, and in many places impossible. The water recedes, the water holes become drier and drier, and a large number disappear entirely; birds and fish are gone, and the many varieties of lilies and yams disappear. It is then that the native appreciates the value of water, just as before he realized the harm it could do him. It is doubtful if anyone ever died of thirst in this country, but it is certain that many have felt its pangs. Deaths have occurred from the great floods. It is small wonder that with the food [823] and drink of life dependent on the water holes, and possible death resulting from the great floods, the native has made water his chief symbol of the clan's spiritual life.

312 The water hole may be an ordinary small lake or billibong, a river
778 or creek flooding through the domain of the clan, a spring of water, or a native well or water hole; and in a few cases it may be the ocean itself, but this last form is usually associated with a tidal spring.[9] All the water holes found in the territory of a clan are divided into two classes: they are either garma wells or narra (ranga) wells. The first are totemic but not sacred; they were made by the lower order of totems, whose emblems may be displayed in camp and seen by the women. The narra wells are always sacred; they were made by the higher wongar totems, whose emblems are ranga (higher emblems) and can be seen only by the initiated young men after the age of puberty. A clan always has at least one and sometimes three or four of the latter.

778 The narra water hole is usually not taboo to women. They may
[562] obtain water there, bathe in the pool, and possibly fish or gather yams and lily bulbs. Occasionally a well becomes so taboo that no woman is allowed near it. Such is the great well, Mir-rir-min-a, of the

[192] [9] The following native terms are used: a water hole or well, mang-o-tji (literally, eye); a spring, mil-min-jerk; river, man-i (literally, throat); creek, par-ka; a small rill running from a spring or artesian well, ri-el-la; billibong, lum-mi (upper thigh); rock-basin water, gar-ra (rain) nar-ku-la (water); fresh-water bog, mar-a-ka; saline but drinkable bog water, gal-la-min-dir; the ocean, or salt spring, or any salt water which is undrinkable, ka-pu mon-ok (water salt).

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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313 Wood is chosen for its degree of hardness and weight and also for its shape according to the purposes of the object to be made. The main forms used are (1) long, slender, light (or heavy) shafts; (2) hollow logs; (3) roots with a well-defined arc; (4) long, straight, slender trunks with thick roots running off at a right angle from the shaft; (5) forked sticks; (6) ends of branches with many twigs and leaves; (7) any variety of dry wood; and (8) very large light wood tree trunks.

314 Three types of bark are used: (1) a long, thick, wide type found on the trunk of the larger eucalyptus; (2) thin paper-like bark from the Melaleuca; and (3) long thin fibers of root bark easily macerated.

Many varieties of leaves are technological material. They are usually [252] gathered in bundles by breaking off branches, but one large-leafed species is used singly as a plate on which to put fresh meat for cooking.

The long reeds of the water-lily ponds, spear grass particularly, and many other varieties of reeds are utilized.

237 The few animal materials used are, from land animals: kangaroo fat, kangaroo gut, kangaroo leg bones, bird feathers, bird bones (particularly leg), opossum fur, opossum gut and human hair; from sea animals: sting-ray prongs, fish and shark vertebrae, bivalve shells, and the melon shell.

Deposits of red ocher and pipe clay are mined along certain portions 317 of the seacoast. Yellow ocher is found in outcroppings. Round river 316 stones about the size of goose eggs are gathered. Diorite stones are also used. Quartzite is quarried from outcroppings. Ordinary earth and sand are used in making houses and ceremonial objects on the ground. Rock 342 ledges forming caves are utilized as shelters during the rainy season. 312 Rock basins which catch rain water are used as types of primitive cisterns to supply water in the absence of wells and fresh-water courses.

3. *General Description of Technical Methods Used in Making Raw Materials into Cultural Artifacts*

000 Only the general methods by which raw material is formed into artifacts will be discussed here. Each specific technique will be described in the section dealing with the articles manufactured.

412 The chief tools used with food are the ground stone axe,[4] a knife (formerly made of bone, but, since the Malay contacts, of iron), and a variety of bivalve shell.

322 Cylindrical wooden articles are made by cutting down a tree or

[4] The iron tomahawk is now used in its place.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

The technique has not been lost, for several old men know how they are made. 177

Food Grinding Stone.—These small stones are used to grind up seeds or nuts gathered by the women and to break mussel shells. They are three or four inches in length, the same in width, and about two inches in thickness. A rock of the proper shape is used and no artificial shaping is done. However, there is a socializing agency at work, in the sense that a round rock flattened on the two opposite sides is preferred and, further, the grinding gradually works the center into a cavity; such a stone has now assumed value and is sought for by a woman in preference to a new stone. The depression is sometimes an inch and a half deep. The stone weighs about a pound and a half normally, but varies from one-half to two and a quarter pounds. [253] 412

A larger-sized grinding stone also used by the native women is five inches by three inches and weighs about four pounds. It is also flattened on two sides.

The upper grinding stone, or grinder, is usually egg-shaped and is nothing more than an untreated smooth water stone. It has a diameter of about one and one-half inches and weighs from one-eighth to a quarter of a pound.

Camp Wells.—Two types of wells are dug during the dry season. The first is made more or less unconsciously by each person's excavating a small amount of earth from the bottom of a shallow water hole and continuing this process as the water dries up in the latter part of the season. The second variety is purposefully dug where water is known to be. It may be one or two feet in diameter or large enough to allow a man to get down in it to fill his paper-bark basin. Wells of this type sometimes reach a depth of four or five feet. Associated with an artificially constructed well is usually found the long-handled paper-bark container, made by attaching a long stick to an ordinary container with fiber string. 312

Bridges.—The Murngin often construct rude bridges by placing one to three tree trunks over the smaller streams about the camp. 491

7. Articles Used in Ceremonies

Feather Headdresses.—The chief materials used in making feather headdresses are resin, beeswax, fiber string, feathers of various birds, leg bones of birds, and wooden or sting-ray prongs. The feathers are hafted to the wooden, bone, or sting-ray pins with ironwood resin. White and black cockatoo tail feathers, the crest of the sulphur-crested cockatoo, emu, jabiru, egret, heron, native companion, goose, and duck feathers are the chief ones used, but feathers of other birds are also utilized. 292 287

The pin of the Gunabibi type of headdress is four to six inches long, and usually incised and ruddled if of wood. Sometimes the pin is made from the leg bone of a bird. The resin or beeswax hafting is in the shape [537]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

Of aboriginal feet the least said the better; for they definitely give the lie to the theory that protective footwear spoils natural shapeliness. Toes are broken, knobbed, and widely spaced: this is particularly true of the first and second toes, by which they easily grasp and lift spears and large sticks or grip the rigging in climbing to the masthead of a lugger. Hands, however, are beautifully shaped, with long tapering fingers, and compare more favourably with an average European hand.

Finally, aboriginal skin is not black, as is popularly supposed, but is in varying shades of velvety brown, for there are blondes and brunettes in the Arnhem Land bush.

Daily life has not changed in a thousand decades, and still involves hunting with stone and wooden spears and stone axes for everything the nomad eats. Their camp grounds are well known, and are usually found on sandy slopes or beaches, reasonably close to water but as far as possible from the swamps that usually swarm with mosquitoes and sand-flies. A typical instance is 'Damballia' or Breamer Island, favoured for turtle hunting and named after its totemic waterhole. Having heard a lot about it, I set out to see it with some boys in a canoe. I took provisions and water for myself and flour for the boys, but they declined my offer of a drum for water, remarking that the well on the island would supply their needs and mine too.

With a favourable wind and tide we landed on the island at sunrise, and whilst my billy boiled, the boys went off to the well for water. As I was finishing my breakfast I noticed an overpowering smell; and found that it came from the well-water they were using to mix their damper. Even then they steadfastly maintained that it was up to standard, and politely declined some of mine. I found the well to be an open waterhole, completely covered by pandanus palms in which thousands of small doves and other birds were roosting. Nearby were several broken-down huts, and dozens

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

disease, scarcity of food compels the occupants to look for fresh sites. 364

Well-defined tracks link food-gathering areas and meander in or around jungles and along swamps and creeks wherever there is good hunting. Accompanied by a couple of aboriginal families and a few boys, I followed one of these tracks for about forty miles to where a distant horde had migrated. Men went ahead with their spears, and the women followed with young children, family possessions, and food-gathering dilly-bags. Every little while there was an outbreak of squealing from the women and yelping from the dogs, as a bush rat or other animal was dragged from a hollow log or tree. Occasionally a woman darted off from the track and some miles farther on rejoined the party with a bundle of edible roots or yams. 487 484 [224] [222]

By sundown we left the bush and came out on a sandy beach on the northern shores of Port Bradshaw, and men and boys were soon lying on the sand waiting for the women to prepare the camps, dig in the sand for fresh water, and cook the shellfish. Once the food was ready, the women took it to their husbands, who shared it with unmarried companions. Darkness comes quickly in the north, and married men settled down with their wives and children around their separate family fires, whilst the unattached males discreetly camped some distance away. Unmarried men always separate themselves from family groups, and any visiting males temporarily without wives stay with the bachelors. Not infrequently married men determine where the bachelors' camp is to be made, and with vivid memories of their own youthful and indiscriminate ways, rigorously enforce this segregation. In the bush, ever-courteous nomads reserved a place for me beside the young men's fire, but never anywhere near a family group, although the youths have sometimes been strangers and the married families well known to me. [462] [312] [264] 361 589 [123]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER SIX

From Hand to Mouth

ABORIGINES have lived from hand to mouth for centuries, but it is a wonder that any human being can live in Arnhem Land and find enough to eat. Though the Reserve covers 34,000 square miles, an average white man would perish in it if he were not rescued by a Stone Age man. On the other hand an aboriginal family, isolated many miles from its hunting-grounds, can calmly grind hardwood into hunting spears and digging-sticks, make fire by twirling one stick against another, find water, erect a shelter to suit the weather conditions, and make a comfortable camp.

Iniji, an aboriginal boy of eleven years, was inadvertently abandoned on a barren island near Yirrkala when his horde divided forces and went away in their canoes. Iniji was deformed and had difficulty in hobbling, yet he kept himself alive for over a month by crawling along the beach for turtle eggs and shellfish. For moisture he manipulated long grass straws far under a low cliff face and sucked the only fresh water on the island.

Contrary to popular belief, aboriginal foods are mainly of vegetable origin, although they also eat animals, birds, fish, and reptiles. For countless centuries, Stone Age hunters have tested roots, yams, berries, animals, birds, fish, reptiles, and shellfish, and numerous deaths have resulted from poisoning, yet they have perfected methods of treatment. They have also evolved an astonishingly efficient digestive system, and also jaws and teeth that bend wire and small iron bars into spears, and nails into fish-hooks.

Most of the forty varieties of yams found in the Reserve